

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application as currently amended and in light of the following discussion is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-4, 7, 8, 10-12, 14-21, 24, 25, 27-29, 31-38, and 41-46 are currently pending. Claims 5, 6, 22, 23, 39, and 40 are canceled without prejudice or disclaimer and Claims 1, 7, 8, 15, 18, 24, 25, 32, and 37 are amended by the present amendment. As amended Claims 1, 7, 8, 15, 18, 24, 25, 32, and 37 are supported by the original claims, no new matter has been added.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 1-3, 5, 10-12, 14, 18-20, 22, 27-29, and 31 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Briffe et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,112,141, hereinafter "Briffe") in view of Snyder et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,664,989, hereinafter "Snyder '989"), Marks et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,699,082, hereinafter "Marks"), and Oder et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,475,594, hereinafter "Oder"); Claims 8 and 25 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Briffe in view of Snyder '989, Marks, Oder, and Westerman (U.S. Patent No. 6,404,443); Claims 4, 16, 21, 33, 35, and 36 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Briffe, Snyder '989, Marks, and Oder in view of Snyder (U.S. Patent No. 6,381,519, hereinafter "Snyder '519"); Claims 37, 38, and 41-44 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Snyder '989 in view of Westerman and Briffe; and Claims 17, 34, 45, and 46 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Briffe in view of Snyder '989, Marks, Oder, and Muller et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,072,473, hereinafter "Muller"). However, Claims 6, 7, 15, 23, 24, 32, 39, and 40 were objected to as dependent on a rejected base claim, but otherwise were indicated as including allowable subject matter if re-written in independent form.

Applicants gratefully acknowledge the indication that Claims 6, 7, 15, 23, 24, 32, 39, and 40 include allowable subject matter.

With respect to the rejection of Claims 1 and 18 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Briffe, Snyder '989, Marks, and Oder, that rejection is respectfully traversed. Claim 1 is amended to include the subject matter of Claims 5 and 6. As Claim 6 was indicated as including allowable subject matter, amended Claim 1 (and Claims 2-4, 7, 8, 10-12, 14 16, 17, and 35 dependent therefrom) is allowable. Claim 18 is amended to include the subject matter of Claims 22 and 23. As Claim 23 was indicated as including allowable subject matter, amended Claim 18 (and Claims 19-21, 24, 25, 27-29, 31, 33, 34, and 36 dependent therefrom) is allowable.


Further Claims 15 and 32 were amended to be in independent form. Thus, Claims 15 and 32 are also allowable.

With respect to the rejection of Claim 37 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Snyder '989 in view of Westerman and Briffe, that rejection is respectfully traversed. Claim 37 is amended to include the subject matter of Claim 39. As Claim 39 was indicated as including allowable subject matter, amended Claim 37 (and Claims 38 and 41-46 dependent therefrom) is allowable.

Consequently, in view of the present amendment, no further issues are believed to be outstanding in the present application, and the present application is believed to be in condition for formal Allowance. A Notice of Allowance for Claims 1-4, 7, 8, 10-12, 14-21, 24, 25, 27-29, 31-38, and 41-46 is earnestly solicited.

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